

Shaker Meetinghouse  
Approx. 20 mi. north of Portland, west of  
State Rt. 26, south of North Raymond Road,  
northwest edge of Church Family area  
Sabbathday Lake  
Cumberland County  
Maine

HABS No. ME-107

HABS  
ME  
3-SAB  
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## SABBATHDAY LAKE SHAKER COMMUNITY MEETINGHOUSE

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Location: West of State Route 26, Sabbathday Lake,  
Cumberland County, Maine [South of North Raymond Road]

Present Owner: The Shaker Society (The United Society of  
Believers in Christ's Second Appearing)

Present Use: Museum

Brief Statement  
of Significance: An excellent example of this building type and  
of fine framing and carpentry, representing a  
vernacular survival of exposed framing and simple  
trim. Unusually effective in its design and  
detail, the Meetinghouse illustrates, at an early  
date, that spare neatness and precision which was  
to become typical of the Shaker tradition.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. Original and Subsequent Owners: The Shaker Community.
- B. Date of Erection: 1794. Built 19 years after the founding  
of the movement (originally the Shaking Quakers) in the  
United States by Mother Ann Lee, who came from England in  
1774. Sister Mildred Barker of the Shaker Library at  
Sabbathday Lake, Maine, has said this (February 16, 1964)  
concerning Moses Johnson, the probable architect of the  
Meetinghouse: "Although we have not written documentation,  
I believe that tradition points to him beyond any reasonable  
doubt as the architect." Johnson was a member of the  
Enfield, New Hampshire, Shaker community.
- C. Sources of Information: Sister Mildred Barker and Sister  
Ethel Peacock, Sabbathday Lake Village, New Gloucester;  
History of Cumberland County, Maine (Everts and Peck,  
Philadelphia: 1880).

Prepared by Samuel M. Green  
Wesleyan University  
July 1962

D. Selected Shaker Bibliography:

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Hopping, D. M. C., and Watland, Gerald R. "The Architecture of the Shakers," Antiques, Vol. 72, No. 4 (October 1957), 335-339.

Johnson, Clifton. "The Passing of the Shakers," Old-time New England, XXV, No. 1 (July 1934), 3-19; and XXV, No. 2 (October 1934), 50-66.

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Melcher, Marguerite Fellows. The Shaker Adventure. Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1941.

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"The Shakers," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, XV, No. 86 (June-November 1857), 164-177.

(Additional Shaker bibliographical listings may be found in Edward Deming Andrews' The People Called Shakers and Marguerite Fellows Melcher's The Shaker Adventure.)

Bibliography prepared by John C. Poppeliers  
Architectural Historian  
National Park Service  
March 1963

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest and merit: This structure was built in 1794 by the Shakers; all materials and labor were supplied by them. It was probably designed by Moses Johnson of the Enfield, New Hampshire, community. It is exceptionally well proportioned and simply detailed. Of special interest are the hardware, heating stoves, boxed knee braces, and stairways.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is exceptionally well preserved but lacks sufficient fire protection to insure its safety.

### B. Detailed Description of the Exterior:

1. General description: The Meetinghouse is a two-and-a-half-story wooden frame structure with wooden siding, a two-story ell, and a gambrel roof with asphalt-shingled

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MEETINGHOUSE

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covering. There are two entrances into the meeting room and one into the ell. The entrance on the south side was intended for the use of the brethren, and that on the north for the sisters. The entrance to the ell was reserved exclusively for the Ministry. The building is on the west side of State Route 26 and faces east of northeast. Its dimensions are 32'-7" x 55'-9 1/4".

2. Foundations: Exterior sills bear on dressed granite slabs, which are also foundation walls. A large wooden beam is at mid-span running the full length of the structure; it appears to rest on grade. Intermediate beams are notched to receive floor joists. There are fieldstone chimney foundations.
3. Wall construction: Wood siding, feathered, with 4" exposure, nailed at approximately 22" on center, appears to be modified post and girt. (Nails were made by Joseph Briggs, one of the Shaker brothers and an apprentice.) 10-1/2" baseboard; 6-1/2" corner boards with 3/4" bead.
4. Stoops: Granite stoops and steps at each entrance. Iron boot scrapers at each entrance.
5. Chimneys: Brick (red orange), two with corbeled courses at top. Brick made at foot of Sabbathday Lake. Chimneys have clean-outs at floor level, through vertical sliding section of baseboard.
6. Openings:
  - a. Windows and shutters: (1) First floor: Windows are modern, six-over-six light, double-hung sash. Original windows were twelve-over-twelve light (7" x 9") double-hung sash. Wooden louvered shutters, extended stiles at bottom only, hinged at both jambs or at one and pivoted. Simple wooden cornice, heavy sill. (2) Second and third floors: Windows are six-over-six light and appear to be original (old glass, heavy muntins).
  - b. Doors and doorways: (1) Meetinghouse: Two, two-paneled (flush interior side) doors per opening, raised panels, mortise and tenon with dowel fasteners. Jamb has beaded edge. Simple wooden cornice. (2) Ell: Four-paneled door, raised panels (flush interior), mortise and tenon, nailed. Eight-paneled fixed transom.
7. Roof, eaves, and dormers: Gambrel roof with asphalt shingles, which replaced wooden shingles; these replaced original wood shakes (1876). Simple wood cornice and boxed eaves. Gable

roof on ell. Metal gutters and downspouts. Dormers: Shed 3-SAB  
roof, siding on walls, six-over-six light windows, several 1-  
wooden louvered shutters.

C. Detailed Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: Brothers' and sisters' entrances to meeting room. "Spectator" benches around the periphery, movable benches in center of room; two iron stoves at each end of meeting room. Access to ell, stairs to ministry's "apartments" second floor. Ell built in 1839; date painted on cabinet door under stairway.
- b. Second floor: Stairway in ell, open space in ell, central hall to crossing hall and two stairs to half story, four chambers over meeting room.
- c. Half story: Stair hall, one room each side of stair hall. Closets under eaves.

2. Stairways:

- a. Ell: "U"-shaped stairs, separated from entry by wooden board partitions, 8-1/4" risers, 9-1/4" tread, turned hand rail, balustrade, square newels and balusters, molded rail.
- b. Central stairs, second to half floor: 8-1/2" tread, 9" riser, square newels, board stringer receives square balusters. Molded rail.

3. Flooring: Pine boards, 8"-12" wide, painted yellow-ochre or yellow-white, unpainted in meetinghouse, pink in ell.

4. Walls: Wooden board wainscot (Prussian blue) in meeting room. Plaster walls with blue chair rails throughout. Walls painted white.

5. Ceilings: Meeting room ceiling, white plaster with boxed beams (beaded edges) and knee braces painted blue. Plaster ceilings throughout.

6. Doorways and doors: Wooden doors, four paneled, raised panels one side only; two-paneled closet doors, raised panels one side only. Fixed four-light headlight in doorway between ell and apartments, second floor.

7. Trim: All trim painted Prussian blue, beaded edges. Wooden strips with wooden pegs for hanging wearing apparel. Splayed reveal of windows. Benches painted yellow-ochre and blue, or varnished. Corner posts are boxed.
  8. Hardware: Wide variety strap hinges with spear finials, pintles, bolts, glazed door knobs, thumb latches, H and HL hinges, wooden door pulls, wooden keeps on thumb latches.
  9. Lighting: No electricity. Probably lighted by lamps or candles. No fixtures remain.
  10. Heating: Iron, wood-burning stoves, made by Shakers and of exceptional quality. Chimneys thimbled for stove pipes.
- D. Site: The building is located in the Shaker Community on the west side of State Route 26, facing east-northeast. The Ministry Shop is to the north. There is a wooden picket fence attached to stone posts. There are two gates opposite the meeting room doorways, and a wagon gate between this building and the Ministry Shop. Large trees are located between the road and the Meetinghouse.

Prepared by F. Blair Reeves, Architect  
National Park Service  
August 1962